

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 CU-02

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INFO ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO BY POUCH

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT MX

SUBJ: INTERNAL SITUATION IN OAXACA STATE

REF: MEXICO 2584

SUMMARY: THE OAXACA POLITICAL "CRISIS" HAS BEEN AT LEAST TEMPORARILY RESOLVED BY REPLACING THE GOVERNOR AND APPEARING TO COMPROMISE ON THE UNIVERSITY ISSUE WHICH WAS THE IMMEDIATE CAUSE OF THE DISORDERS. LACK OF POLITICAL SKILL BY OAXACA GOVERNOR WAS MAJOR INGREDIENT IN PROBLEM, BUT EPISODE SHOWS THAT MARGIN FOR ERROR IN SOCIALLY AND ECONOMICALLY BACKWARD AREAS SUCH AS OAXACA IS THIN INDEED. USE OF ARMY IN RESTORING ORDER AND APPOINTMENT OF MILITARY MAN AS INTERIM GOVERNOR ARE NOT NOVEL IN SUCH SITUATIONS BUT WORTH NOTING. END SUMMARY.

1. POLITICAL SITUATION IN OAXACA STATE, WHICH HAD BEEN FESTERING FOR AT LEAST SIX MONTHS, IN LAST TEN DAYS WAS WITNESSED BY SEVERAL VIOLENT INCIDENTS (REF). PROBLEM BEGAN WITH AN INTRA-STUDENT STRUGGLE FOR CONTROL OF THE STATE UNIVERSITY, A CHARACTERISTIC OF POLITICS IN SEVERAL OTHER MEXICAN STATES. OAXACA GOVERNOR MANUEL
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ZARATE AQUINO, WHO IS POLITICALLY CLOSE TO FORMER PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA AND WHO WAS SELECTED OWING TO THE PRESIDENT'S BACKING, INJECTED HIMSELF INTO CONFLICT ABOUT SIX MONTHS AGO BY APPOINTING HIS OWN MAN AS UNIVERSITY RECTOR, A MOVE WHOSE LEGALITY WAS IMMEDIATELY CHALLENGED. ZARATE STEADFASTLY REFUSED TO ENTERAIN PROPOSAL FOR REFERENDUM ON HIS APPOINTEE, AND

BY HIS INTRANSIGENCE MADE HIS GOVERNMENT A FOCUS FOR
ATTACK.

2. LOCAL DISSIDENT GROUPS AND BOTH REGISTERED AND UN-
REGISTERED OPPOSITION PARTIES JOINED IN POLITICAL FRAY,
ATTEMPTING TO CAPITALIZE. OPPOSITION TO GOVERNOR SPREAD
TO OTHER PARTS OF STATE, NOTABLY TO ISTHMS AREA AROUND
TOWNS OF JUCHITAN AND TEHUANTEPEC WHERE STUDENTS HAVE
BURNED BUSES, AND MOST RECENTLY, WHERE FIVE CAMPESINOS
(PEASANTS) WERE KILLED IN CLASH WITH STATE POLICE. AT
THIS POINT, MEXICAN ARMY WAS CALLED OUT, AND CURRENTLY
IS ACTIVELY PATROLLING IN ISTHMUS AND IN STATE CAPITAL.

3. OACACA'S CRISIS WAS AT LEAST TEMPORARILY RESOLVED
MARCH 3 WHEN GOVERNOR ZARATE REQUESTED A SIX MONTH'S
LEAVE OF ABSENCE(I.E., WAS OUSTED ON PRESIDENTIAL
ORDERS) AND WAS REPLACED WITH OAXACA SENATOR ELISEO
JIMENEZ RUIZ, AN ARMY GENERAL WITH PRIOR POLITICAL
EXPERIENCE AS A FEDERAL DEPUTY. GOM INCLUDED AS PART
OF PACKAGE DEAL, TO WHICH VARIOUS SIDES APPARENTLY HAVE
AGREED, REUNUCIATION OF ANY CLAIMS FOR UNIVERSITY
RECTORSHIP BY ZARATE'S APPOINTEE AND BY HIS OPPONENT
AND APPOINTMENT OF A FORMER GOVERNOR AS TEMPORARY RECTOR.

4. POLITICAL PUNDITS HERE WILL BE TEMPTED TO SEE THIS AS
PURGE OF ECHEVERRIA SUPPORTERS, BUT WE THINK GOM REMOVED
ZARATE IN SPITE OF HIS ECHEVERRIA CONNECTIONS, NOT BE-
CUASE OF THEM. USE OF ARMY IN RESTORING ORDER AND THE
APPOINTMENT OF ARMY GENERAL AS INTERIM GOVERNOR MIGHT
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BE INTERPRETED BY SOME HERE AS AN INDICATION JLP GOVERN-
MENT WILL RELY ON FORCE TO HANDLE SUCH SITUATIONS, BUT
IN FACE THAT ACCOMPANYING DEAL IS TRADITIONAL IN APPEARING
TO GIVE IN TO PRESSURE WITHOUT CEDING CONTROL OF THE
UNIVERSITY, WHICH IS KEY TO SITUATION, ALSO, WE KNOW
THAT GOM WAS DISGUSTED WITH ZARATE'S POLITICAL INEPTITUDE
AND SUSPECT THAT JIMENEZ WAS CHOSEN MORE ON THE BASIS
OF HIS POLITICAL ABILITY THAN ON HIS MILITARY CREDENTIALS.
REAL SIGNIFICANCE OF EPISODE IN OUR VIEW IS THAT IT
DEMONSTRATES THAT THE MEXICAN MARGIN FOR POLITICAL ERROR IN
STATES LIKE OAXACA, WHERE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
LAGS BEHIND REST OF NATION, IS RAZOR THIN.
THOMPSON

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